

GFMD 2020

RT 2 - Skilling migrants for employment – Thursday 21 January, 2021

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Guiding questions

- What are positive and possibly new experiences with multi-stakeholder partnerships for skilling migrants for employment? What are the challenges as experienced by different stakeholders? - How can multi-stakeholder partnerships help overcome existing challenges in matching labour demand and supply and sustain economic recovery more effectively? - Are there new actors that should be included and new approaches that should be considered?

Talking points:

Challenges experienced especially in the area of skilling migrants for employment are numerous, but there are also a handful of good examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships that we can learn from. I'd like to start with 3 broad challenges identified by CS (and also within the context of covid-19 / global pandemic).

Before I set out the challenges, it's important to mention that in our deliberations as CS, we felt that it was important to discuss the theme of skilling migrants for employment together with the theme on governance of labour migration. We took a more holistic approach in this and this is reflected in the key challenges and some of solutions and partnerships proposed.

Challenges:

1. Lack of legal pathways for highly and low-skilled migrants and consequently the lack of skills-matching for migrants and in particular lower-skilled migrants. Legal pathways for labour mobility are limited and mostly temporary or seasonal and where they exist, they are often open to highly skilled workers which results in the use of irregular pathways for the lower-skilled (in most cases) or results in losing their regular status and becoming undocumented while in country of destination.

Covid-19 / the pandemic has shown us that all skills are needed / important – we've seen this in the health care sector with domestic workers, care workers, health workers, also other frontline like teachers, public transport workers etc. There is also a grave contradiction in that while these frontline roles were deemed as essential, with migrant workers gaining some recognition, there is little effort in the development of clear pathways for skilling or upskilling for employment and for regularisation.

During the pandemic, we have also seen recruitment of skilled health professionals via legal pathways but without much support for their families left behind or even social protection for themselves. And also without formalised structures of support for those institutions in the south that produce these skilled workers.

2. The pandemic has presented us with this new challenge of mobility restrictions which is very much needed but, at the same time, also flies in the face of skilling migrants for employment and mobility and highlights the need to work our way towards vaccination for all including migrants. So, despite the impact of migrants as key workers and the aging demographics in the north (in Europe in particular) and the youth bulge, especially in Africa, there are no clear pathways for regularization in many European countries and the status of migrants remains unclear beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. There continue to be gaps and challenges around the recognition of qualifications of new and existing migrants, as well as access to lifelong education and training opportunities. A lack of accreditation of qualifications = undervaluing, undercompensating and exploiting migrant workers by employers and destination countries continues .

The challenges point to the need for more formalization, more regularization, which will allow for better management of a rights-based and human centered transnational approach and better matching of migrant skills to industry demands, and helping to build resilience (economy recovery). Skills partnerships should form part of bilateral agreements, should always be agreed through social dialogue, involving civil society actors including migrant and diaspora communities themselves. It should cover both national and international markets, be balanced and mutually beneficial for country of origin, destination country and the migrant themselves. I would like to share four examples from CS discussions that provide us with **some good practices for collaboration with CS but also for multi-stakeholder partnerships:**

1. Upshift by UNICEF – works to upskill young disadvantaged people including refugees and migrants in schools, developing youth innovation labs, and providing skills for social entrepreneurship and soft and hard skills to work in dynamic labour markets in Europe.
2. Germany-Philippines bilateral agreements on mobility partnership, negotiated with the support of ILO. Nurses from Philipinnes gain access to education in Germany for eventual employment – safeguards against discrimination are included as well as a monitoring mechanism. It adopts a whole of society approach so migrants are involved in shaping their livelihood. Migrants move with rights, with their families as well as have access to a pathway for regularization.

These 2 examples point to good practice of establishing principled engagement that involves migrant communiities and civil society in dialogue, consultation, implementation and participation as part of a whole of gov't/society approach.

The use of technology is also key in how we build resilience:

3. Programmes for Digitalisation of Skills Training at EU level and should also be implemented in other countries. This would be a real way forward where this is possible esp in the face of travel restrictions.
4. Ecuador has enacted a human mobility law which applies to migrants in Ecuador as well as returning migrants. Ecuador takes an inventory of skills acquired by returned Ecuadorian migrant workers that they integrate into their national plan. This law and its implementation is supported by CS in Ecuador.

This last example demonstrates the need for effective coordination between governments and civil society in ensuring or working towards labour demand that matches supply; and even more so now on the health and economic impact of the pandemic – this approach can help ensure that the framework of ILO’s guidelines and principles for fair recruitment are upheld. Skills recognition is a crucial part of this process as well as skills matching, upgrading, reskilling in both origin and destination countries.

1. **Actors:** Partnerships should be truly whole of society bringing together – health sector, private sector, technology sector, civil society and trade unions to ensure standards are met, states to provide enabling policies, countries of destination and origin, trade unions, local governments and cities.
2. **Actors:** Civil Society collaboration is important and agency is crucial. In this, important to recognise that migrant and diaspora communities are stakeholders not only as employees but also as employers, entrepreneurs and themselves providers of intellectual transfer and skills.
3. **New approach:** In building economic resilience / sustained economic recovery, there was a call for prioritisation of economic development of the global south, recognising that migrant workers from the south contribute significantly to the wealth of the north – creating jobs, developing institutions where migrant skills are developed and strengthening economies in the south and therefore creating a foundation for all to prosper regardless of location.

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Additional points in follow up intervention (and some expansion):

1. Bilateral agreements that promote not only national, but also regional and transnational cooperation amongst relevant government ministries eg Min of Education, Min of Foreign Affairs, Min of Labour etc of both home and destination countries are needed to facilitate transnational recognition of academic certificates and skill sets. Within these agreements, the role of Trade Unions, local governments and cities cannot be understated.
2. This goes back to the principles of regular migration – reviewing existing processes, ensuring they are human-centred approaches, and providing more opportunities that are much more holistic and mutually beneficial – ie taking into account the needs of industries and labour demands in country of origin and country of destination. Now that employers can also see even increased output with virtual working, we must also

factor in creativity and the use of technology and digitalisation for the purposes of upskilling and employment.

3. The pandemic has shown us the link between labour migration, skilling and public health – vaccination will be particularly important for mobility if we are upskilling for employment in or beyond one's borders. At the same time, given the significant reality and experience of working remotely, could we be creative and innovative and create decent jobs and industries in locations where supply of labour is high? The use of technology can be crucial for this kind of creativity and innovation.
4. **New approach:** particularly crucial in building economic resilience / sustained economic recovery, a call for prioritisation of economic development of the global south, recognising that migrant workers from the south contribute significantly to the wealth of the north. If we are going to be resilient and overcome challenges in matching labour demand and supply, then the process of skilling migrants must take into account stronger economies in the south, which would mean better skills matching with industries regardless of location, easier mobility and decent job accessibility, rights-based regular pathways for mobility so that even in the face of a global pandemic of this nature, migrant workers are resilient, countries of origin and destination are better prepared, and better coordinated and have the resources to support migrant workers and returnees.